

ADDITIONS
TO THE
COLLECTION

STANDARDS OF GROWTH

One standard by which the growth of a museum is measured is the additions made to its collection. Edward Drummond Libbey, the founder of this Museum, was well aware of this when he provided by will that at least half of the income from his estate must be used for acquisition of art. Funds from his estate as well as generosity of other donors have assured the continuing growth of this Museum's collections of art. The art has of course proved to be the Museum's greatest growth asset.

This issue of the Museum News is devoted to a selection from the works of art which this Museum has acquired during the past few years. These recent acquisitions include art works from ancient Greece to our own time.

Among these are two important works which were not acquired with the Libbey bequest, but

rather as gifts of other donors. An 18th century French table centerpiece of gilded bronze, worthy of the court of Versailles, was given by Mr. and Mrs. Edward H. Alexander. *Notes Toward a Definition of Nobody*, a noted work by Ronald B. Kitaj came to the Museum from the distinguished collection of contemporary art formed by Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Gosman. These are welcome gifts which have enriched the Museum's expanding collections of European decorative arts and contemporary American painting. The art described in this publication is typical of the quality and variety of art in the Museum's collection. The interest and support of all Toledoans is needed if the Museum and its collections are to continue to grow and provide a growing cultural heritage for all in our community.

Otto Wittmann, Director

Museum News

The Toledo Museum of Art
Toledo, Ohio

New Series: Volume 17, Number 1
1974 (Volume 16 terminated with Number 3)

Cover
Table Centerpiece
Gilt bronze and marble veneer
French, about 1700-1710
Ht. 22¾ in., w. 21½ in. (52.8, 54.6 cm.)
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward H. Alexander
71.178

GREEK GOLD JEWELRY

The military successes of Alexander the Great between 336 and 323 B.C. brought all of the known world from Greece to India under Greek domination. Although Alexander's early death ended his dream of uniting the ancient world, he did succeed in forming a Greco-Persian empire which brought Greek civilization to the East. Even after Alexander's death, his successors maintained Greek military and cultural supremacy in the Near East for three centuries. Greek soldiers, merchants, artists and scholars established a new cosmopolitan era in the Eastern Mediterranean in which Greek values and ideals became standards of life. This period, the Hellenistic Age, extended from Alexander's death in 323 B.C. to the suicide of Cleopatra of Egypt, the last major Hellenistic ruler, in 30 B.C.

For the Greeks, their old enemy Persia symbolized all that was lavish and sumptuous. Greed for the fabled Persian gold and wealth was a major incentive for Alexander's expansionist policy. Gold had been scarce in Greece since Mycenaean times and the yield of gold from the Macedonian mines of Phillip II had begun to dwindle by the time his son came to power. It was therefore not by accident that Alexander's marches were directed at capturing every major source of gold in the East.

Although Alexander's defeat of Darius III brought Greek civilization to the former Persian domains, Greece itself experienced significant changes. Alexander's marriage to the Persian princess Roxane served to legitimize his Greco-Persian empire and set the standard for his officers and men to follow. Greek life experienced an unprecedented wave of Persian influences. The new Persian vogue affected all the arts from furniture-making to literature.

With the new, seemingly limitless supply of gold from the East, the art of jewelry-making flourished as never before in Greece. The taste of the Persian women in Alexander's court created the demand for jewelry of Persian design and Greek ladies of means eagerly adopted the new fashion.

In the last two years, the Toledo Museum has acquired four pieces of Hellenistic jewelry. Among these is a necklace (Fig. 1) of the so-called "strap" format which was widely favored in the Greek world in the early 4th century B.C. Although many such necklaces have survived, two other examples now in the British Museum and the Hermitage are particularly similar to the one now in Toledo. The strap, although apparently a wide band of braided gold wire, is actually composed of four loop-in-loop chains each continuously joined to the one adjacent by a sophisticated form of brazing. Strap necklaces were most commonly hung with many small pendants, either in the form of spear-heads or, as in the Toledo example, in the form of small storage jars or amphorae. In 279 B.C. the inventory of the temple treasury of the island of Delos records just such a necklace: "Necklace of amphorae; weight with the cords 18 drachmai; number of amphorae 58".

These miniature jars give a clue to the date of the necklace. The jar pendants of early Hellenistic jewelry are in the form of a flower bud (popular in Greek jewelry of a much earlier date) to which a neck has been added, forming a bud-shaped vessel with vertical ribs. The same shape (with handles added) occurs in glass vessels of the eastern Mediterranean dating from the 6th to 4th centuries B.C. (Fig. 2, left). The texture of these pendants was enhanced by fastening tiny balls of gold to their



Figure 1
Necklace
Gold with faience beads
330-200 B.C.
Ht. $2\frac{5}{8}$, length $17\frac{1}{2}$ in. (6.5, 44.4 cm.)
71.132

surfaces by the granulation technique. In the second half of the 3rd century, a new type of jar-pendant with smooth walls appeared. This also has a counterpart in glass vessels of the 6th to 4th centuries B.C. (Fig. 2, right). Both jar-pendant types appear in Toledo's necklace indicating their concurrent popularity. The early pendant type appears in the lower row, the later one in the level closest to the strap. Delicate rosettes, cut from sheet gold and overlaid with gold wire, mask the points at

which the pendant chains join the strap. Identical rosettes and discs with concentric rings decorate the links to which the pendants are attached. These devices were often decorated with colorful enameling, which has often disappeared. Whether the rosettes and discs on Toledo's necklace were once enameled can now only be speculated.

Three turquoise-colored faience beads, threaded on gold wire with gold discs between them, hang

from each gold jar forming two registers of brightly colored fringe. Such faience beads had been common in Egypt for centuries before, as well as during the time this necklace was made. Their appearance on this necklace suggests, although does not prove, that the necklace was made in Alexandria. The city, founded by Alexander, became the center of Greek culture in Egypt and it is recognized today as one of the chief centers in which Hellenistic jewelry was made.

The strap has a gold rectangle at either end, to which rings are attached. The join of each ring to its terminal is decorated, as well as strengthened, by two tiny gold balls. These rings suggest how this necklace was worn. In antiquity, necklaces were worn not only around the neck as is customary today, but also from shoulder to shoulder. The intended spacing of the pendants in this necklace is lost when it is fastened at the back of the neck. The length of this piece would permit it to be fastened at each shoulder, allowing for slight swaging due to the weight of the necklace. The small dents in the surfaces of the rectangular strap terminals may be pressure marks from the fibulae or large pins used to secure the ends of the necklace to the shoulders of the owner's garments.

By modern standards, Toledo's necklace appears to be lavish; sufficient in itself to be worn without distraction from other pieces of jewelry. To Hellenistic taste, the opposite is true. Archaeological evidence indicates that the prosperous owners of such magnificent adornments usually had whole sets of jewelry in which groups or all of the pieces were related by common motifs.

The Museum recently acquired such a set, comprised of two armlets and a ring (Fig. 3). All three pieces are in the form of a coiled serpent with the head and forepart at one end and the tail at the other. The type developed in the Classical period and continued in popularity throughout Hellenistic times.

The detail of these pieces is surprisingly minute for their size. The foreparts of the serpents form elegant S-curves. The heads are modelled and chased in realistic detail. On the armlets, the snakes' eyesockets still contain traces of the blue-green enamel that once filled them. The armlet bands, rounded on the outside, diminish gradually in the snakes' tails which turn back onto themselves in intricate figure eight designs. The patterns of scales, made with a U-shaped puncheon, end in double chevrons and dotted circles found in similar pieces at the time.



Figure 2
Miniature Amphorae
Core-formed glass
Eastern Mediterranean
6th-4th century B.C.
Left, Ht. 3½, max. diam. 2 in. (8.9, 5.1 cm.)
Right, Ht. 5½, diam. without handles 1¾ in. (14.0, 4.5 cm.)
23.168, 23.137

The ring is slightly longer than the average length from the joint to the first knuckle on a woman's finger. This has led to the suggestion that such rings may have been used to secure tresses in fashionable coiffures of the day. Unlike the armlets, the coiled band of the ring has a raised central rib which probably strengthened as well as decorated the spiral. The absence of the central rib on the armlets may indicate that the ring was not made at the same time. Also, the knot in the serpent's tail on the ring is unlike the attenuated ripple of the corresponding form in the armlets. It is therefore unlikely that the ring was part of the original ensemble. Perhaps the ring was commissioned at a later date to coordinate with the armlets.

Similar armlets, now in the Museo Nazionale, Tarento, the Hoek collection and a Swiss private collection were all found in Tarentum and date from the late 4th or early 3rd century B.C. Like them, Toledo's armlet pair and ring were probably made there during the same time span. As the art capital of southern Italy, Tarentum was a thriving



Figure 3

Armlets and Ring

Gold with green enamel (armlets)

Perhaps Tarentum, southern Italy

Late 4th-3rd century B.C.

Left to right: Ht. $3\frac{5}{8}$, diam. $2\frac{3}{16}$ in. (9.2, 5.6 cm.);

Ht. $1\frac{3}{16}$, diam. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (3.0, 1.9 cm.);

Ht. 4, diam. $2\frac{5}{8}$ in. (10.2, 6.7 cm.)

73.31, 73.32, 73.30

Hellenistic center, open to the international cultural exchange characteristic of the period. Like the centers which produced ceramics in southern Italy, the similarities of Tarentine jewelry with that made in mainland Greece indicate that jewelry from the mother country was regularly imported and copied in this provincial center.

The jewelry produced during the three centuries following Alexander's death constitutes not only the largest, but the finest group to survive from antiquity. The great quantity of this jewelry can be ascribed to the vast amount of gold available and to the active and increased patronage of the Hellenistic period. The consistent high quality of the

workmanship of Hellenistic jewelry can only be ascribed to the countless hours of laborious work spent on each piece.

The techniques of Hellenistic jewelry have not been reproduced or even thoroughly studied until quite recently. We now realize that even the most apparently simple effects in Hellenistic jewelry are the result of involved and time-consuming processes. Today, the time and technical expertise required to produce such pieces of jewelry would be far more costly than the seemingly priceless value of the raw materials.

Kurt T. Luckner

A NEW SEBASTIANO RICCI

It is often asserted that great periods in art coincide with great periods in history. While true in many instances—5th century Athens and 17th century Holland, to cite just two examples—it is well to be reminded that such a parallel does not always exist. An excellent illustration of this is 18th century Venice.

As the only major port on the eastern coast of Italy, Venice had since the early Middle Ages been the gateway to western Europe on the trade route from the East. The point of departure for the Crusades and the home of Marco Polo, Venice grew prosperous and increasingly independent as a trade and transportation center. The Venetian monopoly of the Eastern trade route was broken in the 15th century by two events, the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 and the discovery of an alternate route to the East via the African cape in 1488. Moreover, the Venetian empire, which by the early 15th century included large territories in the eastern Mediterranean as well as much of northern Italy, was substantially eroded in the first decade of the 16th century when European forces allied to defeat the Venetian army. By the 16th century, when Venice first rose to artistic greatness in the age of Titian, Veronese and Tintoretto, a political and economical decline had set in. By the 18th century the city was a minor European power.

In the 17th century Rome had been the leader, though not the only center, of progressive Italian art. With this in mind, and the political and economic misfortunes of Venice as just outlined, the emergence of Venice as one of the two leading European art centers in the first half of the 18th century—the other being Paris—comes as something of a surprise. Unrivaled in beauty and luxury, Venice became a mecca for the numerous Euro-

pean pleasure-seekers and tourists of the time. The festive spirit of the city, exemplified in its extravagant public celebrations and private parties, boat races and network of gambling houses, is reflected in much Venetian painting. This painting style is characterized by virtuoso brushwork, brilliant colors and a generally lighthearted treatment of subject matter. Its festive aspect derives not only from the character of the city but also from the influence of the 16th century Venetian artist Veronese, whose work often has the quality of a pageant. The influence of Veronese is particularly apparent in the art of Sebastiano Ricci, who, in the early years of the 18th century, led the way in developing the second great Venetian school of painting.

Born in 1659 in the small town of Belluno, about fifty miles north of Venice, Sebastiano Ricci first arrived in Venice at the age of twelve. He studied art there for several years and then began traveling throughout Italy, studying, working or simply visiting such cities as Bologna, Parma and Florence. From about 1687 to 1794 he was in Rome under the patronage of Duke Ranuccio Farnese, then the leading member of an Italian family distinguished for its longstanding involvement in politics and art. By the time Ricci returned to Venice around 1700 he had fully acquainted himself with the main currents of 17th century Italian painting. This is reflected in his art, which at this point is still largely traditional in its use of dramatic narrative and strong contrasts in lighting. Not until about 1705 did Ricci's style acquire a new luminous, graceful quality. This new direction in his art is particularly evident in the important decorations that he executed for the Palazzi Marucelli and Pitti while in Florence in 1706-07.



Venice rose to new international prominence in the first half of the 18th century. Not only was the city a meeting-place for foreign visitors but Venetian art was in demand throughout the Continent. Ricci himself enjoyed immense international favor and success. As early as 1701 he was invited to Schönbrunn, just outside Vienna, to help decorate the new Imperial palace. He received foreign commissions as well as international recognition (for example, he was accepted into the French Royal Academy). Between 1712 and 1716, while in England, Ricci executed Toledo's large *St. Paul Preaching* which formerly belonged to the important early 18th century English patron, Lord Burlington.

A much smaller painting by Ricci has recently been acquired by the Museum, *Christ and the Woman of Samaria* (Fig. 4). It, too, has a connection with England through its provenance in an unknown private collection there. In style, the Samaria canvas is very different from the *St. Paul*. However, the new Ricci acquisition should be compared, not with the *St. Paul*, but with another version of *Christ and the Woman of Samaria* by Ricci in the British Royal Collection (Fig. 5).

The Hampton Court painting resembles ours so much in certain details that it seems clear that one painting was based on the other. The well is nearly identical in each. The position of Christ and the woman relative to the well is similar as is the placement of Christ's legs and the emphatic foliage behind Him. While these compositional parallels are important, their significance should not be overemphasized, for it is the differences rather than the similarities between the two works that are most striking.

The Hampton Court picture is theatrical. The

conspicuous figures and buildings in the background, the crane and pulley attached to the well, the second waterpot, the attendant dog—all these extra "props" which appear in the Hampton Court but not in the Toledo version give the scene a staged appearance, as does the rhetorical gesture of Christ. The Toledo composition, by contrast, is simplified and concentrates more on the essentials. By eliminating fussy details and enlarging the two principal figures, Ricci makes Christ and the woman the sole protagonists, rather than allowing the setting to compete with them for the viewer's attention. The entire tone of the Toledo picture is quieter and more intimate, as best revealed in the contemplative temperament of the woman. With its greater calm and clarity, the contrapposto of the woman and the approximate triangle formed by the figures of Christ and the woman, the Toledo painting exhibits a type of classicism unusual for Ricci. Indeed, the painting as a whole is atypical of Ricci's best-known style, of which the Hampton Court version is an example.

The Hampton Court painting has been dated to the mid 1720's. It is likely that the Toledo version was done after the Hampton Court picture. The sketchy character of the background and the increased chiaroscuro suggest a late date. Furthermore, the depiction of Christ, in the impasto of the paint, the broad handling of the drapery, the strong contrasts in light and dark and the prominent halo, is very close to that of the figure of Christ in the Vienna *Christ on the Mount of Olives*. These two works are also nearly identical in size and they share the same personal, tender quality. On the basis of this connection the Toledo painting should be tentatively dated about 1730, the same date ascribed to the Vienna painting. This would place our picture just four years before Ricci's death.

Figure 4
SEBASTIANO RICCI, Italian (1659-1734)
Christ and the Woman of Samaria, about 1730 (?)
Oil on canvas
Signed lower center: *Riccivs Fecit*
31 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (79 x 62.8 cm.)
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey
71.5



Figure 5
 SEBASTIANO RICCI, Italian (1659-1734)
Christ and the Woman of Samaria, mid 1720's
 Oil on canvas
 88 x 57 in. (223.5 x 144.8 cm.)
 Ex-coll: Consul Joseph Smith; King George III
 Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

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If this dating is correct, the Toledo painting should be included along with several other works which show a surprising new lyricism in Ricci's art toward the end of his life, even at a time when many of his other works are at their most grandiloquent. Particularly significant is the new personal poetic note which the landscape strikes in the Toledo painting. In this Ricci harks back to a Venetian tradition which precedes Veronese, that of Titian and Giorgione.

The most recent and complete information on the Hampton Court painting is in Levey, *The Later Italian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, London, 1964, cat. no. 638. For a discussion and reproduction of the Vienna painting, see the exhibition catalogue, *Dal Ricci al Tiepolo*, Venice, 1969, cat. no. 18.

Dan Ewing

A BOUDOIR SCENE BY LE PRINCE

Among the little masters of the late 18th century in France, Jean-Baptiste Le Prince was surely one of the most colorful personalities. Born in Metz in 1734 of an old artisan family his natural talents as an artist were noted early and he was sent to study with a respected painter of the city when only twelve. As Jules Hédou, Le Prince's biographer, tells us, the precocious boy quickly decided to seek a better artistic education and set his sights on Paris. Knowing he would need money and the backing of an important person to achieve his goal, Le Prince, with considerable pluck, went directly to the governor of Metz, the Maréchal de Belle Isle, who was both the richest and the most important gentleman in the city. After winning his support, Le Prince also cleverly managed to join the governor and his entourage on their seasonal journey to Paris. Thus he arrived in Paris in style, not as an unknown, solitary boy seeking his fortune, but as a member of a nobleman's party.

As one might expect of so confident a young man, Le Prince did not intend to study with just anyone. He went directly to the most famous painter of the day, Francois Boucher, who was so impressed by the ambitious young man and his noble sponsor that he admitted him to his atelier immediately. An able student, Le Prince proved adept at both erotic genre and landscape subjects following in the footsteps of his master. But his career soon slowed down owing to an amorous misadventure. In 1752 at age eighteen, in his usual bold fashion, Le Prince married a rich woman more than twice his age. The stormy marriage saw an almost complete abandonment of his work, as he proceeded to spend most of his wife's small fortune in the pursuit of pleasure. After two years, by mutual agreement, and probably with a mutual

sigh of relief, they parted company and Le Prince finally returned to his work. He also returned the dowry he had received at his marriage.

In search of new means of support, Le Prince now decided in 1758 to journey to Russia. In St. Petersburg, his brother was a furniture maker to the court and his sister was the wife of a language professor at the Academy of Fine Arts. With the addition of a letter of introduction to the French Ambassador from his old sponsor, the governor of Metz, Le Prince's arrival in Russia, like his arrival in Paris, was anything but bumpy. Quickly commissioned by the court to decorate the Winter Palace he could have chosen to stay in the highly Europeanized Russian capital, where most visiting foreign artists were quite content to work for the court and nobility and avoid the less civilized parts of Russia. Instead, Le Prince chose to travel and record the varied peoples of the Russian Empire, from the ladies of Moscow, the ancient Russian capital, to the peasants of Livonia.

This decision marks the turning-point in Le Prince's career, for the drawings from his years of travel in Russia served as the basis for the works which won him fame at home in Paris. Returning to Paris by 1763 to escape the rigors of the Russian climate, he single-handedly began a fashion for things Russian with a long series of paintings and prints which were primarily genre scenes of Russian life. As in Boucher's treatment of Chinese themes, Le Prince's emphasis was on the strange costumes and exotic surroundings. In his first exhibition at the Salon of 1765, Le Prince exhibited perhaps his finest painting of this type, *The Russian Baptism*. This Salon also saw the exhibition of twenty-nine aquatints executed in his improved process which



Figure 6
JEAN-BAPTISTE LE PRINCE, French (1734-1781)
Fear (La Crainte), 1769
Oil on canvas
Signed on lower left: J.B. Le Prince 1769
19 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (50 x 64 cm.)
Ex-coll: Duc de Liancourt; Boittelle; Baroness d'Erlanger;
Dr. Ernst L. Tress; Count William de Bellerroche
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey
70.444



Figure 7
Detail of Figure 6

was hailed as the perfection of this mode of engraving. Although successful, the sameness of his subject matter eventually caused the critics and the public to grow weary of his work. As one witty observer, Bachaumont, noted in his memoirs, "Mr. Le Prince continues to parade before us the entire Russian nation."

When at the Salon of 1777 he exhibited no Russian picture, there was considerable joy among the art public. Always charmed by Le Prince's admitted talent as a painter and draughtsman, they were delighted to see fresh inspiration at work. Among the eleven works he exhibited that year was the Museum's beautiful painting *La Crainte or Fear* (Fig. 6). Small in size, it is a work which ably demonstrates the grace Le Prince could impart to his figures and his ability to create a convincing ambience with furniture, rich materials and other accoutrements.

Le Prince has taken special care in the painting of the silver chocolate pot, the fine white porcelain cups and the casually placed napkin (Fig. 7). Arranged on the deep rose table top, against the dark wall behind, their pale color and clean, crisp forms

have a sensuous impact which competes with the lovely woman for our attention.

Eyes wide, arms extended in helplessness the woman seems to float in a sea of rich and delicate materials which both define her form and set off the softness of her flesh. The pale, grayish rose of the coverlet and the icy blue of the draperies behind the bed are colors in a minor key, dominated by the more intense white and gold of the bedclothes, the woman's garments and the furniture. Light is concentrated on her while shadows veil the margins of the picture. To create the transparent shadows of her neck and side and the foot of the bed, Le Prince has used red-brown underpainting alone, a technique which both his teacher, Boucher, and Fragonard employed. Much more casually drawn and loosely painted than the still-life atop the table, she is a cousin to the females of Boucher in the delicacy of her hands and the pearly tones of her skin and to Fragonard's women in the painterly softness of her profile and her willowy legs. Her beauty prompted Dupont de Nemours, in his letter on the Salon of 1777, to congratulate Le Prince for finally painting other women than those of Russia.

The fact that Le Prince's brother was a furniture maker probably aided him in the accurate depiction of the last word in furniture design that we see here. The gilded furniture is carved with swags, rosettes, regular interlacing (guilloches) and fluting according to the "Greek" style which was the height of advanced fashion in the late 1760's. Le Prince has used the over-turned chair to pull us into the picture space toward the frightened woman who is the pictorial and dramatic focus of the painting.

The representation of the emotions was of great interest to artists in France and throughout Europe in the 18th century. Greuze's bourgeois dramas where wicked sons are punished and beautiful young maidens weep over dead birds are one result of this interest. Another result, less morally uplifting than appeals to virtuous emotions such as remorse or sorrow, are depictions of momentary emotions such as surprise or fear. The boudoir scene of amorous adventure we have here is just one possible variation on the theme of clandestine love. Fragonard was especially active in the creation of these pictures, such as *La Résistance Inutile* (Useless Resistance) or *La Surprise* (The Surprise) in which the woman's lover has taken her by surprise amid a jumble of pillows and bedclothes. Le Prince's *Fear* shows the next stage of this bedroom farce. The two cups upon the table, the over-turned chair and the partial undress of the woman tell us her lover has hastily departed, probably to escape her returning husband whose approach is forewarned by the little dog.

Signed and dated 1769, *La Crainte* was not exhibited at the Salon until 1777. Sometime after Le Prince's untimely death in 1781, it was engraved in reverse by Noël Le Mire. While the first state of

the engraving was an exact transcription of the painting, Le Mire altered the second state to show the head of the lover hiding behind the bed under the drapery. Le Mire evidently hoped to increase the sale of his engraving by means of this added spice. However, it was Le Prince's nature to be more subtle and there is no indication in the painting of the lover's head. In the rumpled coverlet and drapery, Le Prince has suggested rather than demonstrated his hidden presence.

Le Prince only exhibited twice more at the Salons of 1779 and 1781. In poor health since his stay in Russia, he was forced to retire to the country town of Saint-Denis-du-Port in 1777. Working fitfully for the next four years, he died at age 47 on September 30, 1781.

As Diderot noted, Le Prince's talents were particularly suited to working on a small scale, as one might expect of an artist who was as much an engraver as a painter. Consequently he was attracted to the smaller erotic genre pictures of Boucher and Fragonard rather than their monumental mythologies. With his obvious ability to paint beautiful objects beautifully, whether a lovely woman or a fine porcelain cup, Le Prince was at his best in an intimate genre painting such as Toledo's *La Crainte*. Less overt, more restrained in its eroticism than Boucher or Fragonard often were, it is a delightful addition to the painting collection by one of the most characteristic artists of late 18th century France.

William J. Chiego

A LOUIS XIV TABLE CENTERPIECE

In April 1698 the Paris journal, *Mercure Galant*, reported a novelty in its account of a banquet given by the Duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIV:

"In the middle of the table was a large *surtout*, or table centerpiece, of gilded silver. It is only a short time since works of this sort were invented to embellish the centers of tables. They remain there all through the meal. Several different schemes are used. They are often enriched with figures and bear a quantity of things for use at table, so that one wishes for nothing during a meal that cannot be found there. During daytime meals these machines of recent invention conceal beneath useful ornaments the places where one puts candles at night."

In a world where every event at Court was promptly detailed, so careful a description suggests that people abreast of fashion were unfamiliar with this new mode of displaying magnificence. As was so often the case, the lead of Versailles was soon taken up, and until well into the 19th century grand centerpieces were a mark of rank and wealth.

Louis XIV himself used a *surtout* as early as 1693, but its form is not known. Indeed, because centerpieces were ordinarily made of silver not one French example made before 1725 has survived. These massive pieces, along with all the immense quantities of French royal plate that once existed, were melted down to finance a hard-pressed government in times of need from 1689 to the Revolution. Vast numbers of splendid vessels in private hands were sacrificed as well, and although French silver set the European standard in elegant design and execution at this time, very little of it remains. Today one must go to Leningrad or Lisbon to see the monuments of this art, for the Russian and

Portuguese courts were lavish patrons of the great Paris silversmiths of the 18th century.

Under these circumstances, the majestic gilt bronze centerpiece (cover illustration) given by Mr. and Mrs. Edward H. Alexander takes on particular significance, for in it we may have a rare chance to see the art of metalwork as practiced on the highest level during the last years of Louis XIV. It is the only known object of its kind and period. An eight-branched candelabrum is carried on the raised center of a footed platform. At the corners are removable sugar casters; shell shaped boxes for salt or spices are attached to the platform edges. This arrangement seems to have been established at an early date, for an inventory of 1697 describes a silver-gilt centerpiece used by the King at Marly also composed of a base, eight-branched candelabrum and four sugar casters. The lower part of the platform is now formed by thin marble slabs. These are later additions, for empty holes show where other elements were originally attached. We do not know what they were. Perhaps there were further condiment holders which were removed, together with their sockets and supports. Such sockets are present on a later silver centerpiece in the Hermitage made by Claude Ballin II in 1727-28 which also included casters and shell boxes, as well as candle branches and terminal figures.

At first glance, the composition has all the monumental solemnity associated with the Louis XIV style. Yet within its boundaries this fundamentally architectural style allowed for surprise and the play of fantasy, and details of this complex but firmly controlled design show several delightfully fresh inventions. Within the pyramidal outline, each horizontal level is a variation on the



circle, square or octagon. Each element in this masterfully ordered hierarchy is given a specific character largely drawn from the rich repertoire of classical ornament. For instance, no two mouldings are the same, and there is effective contrast between the naturalism of the putto and dolphin, flower-ram's horn candle branches and shell boxes on the one hand, and the geometrical rigor of the basic scheme, footed platform and casters on the other. Certain details repay close attention (Fig. 8). The dolphin rider and scrolled terminal busts of young women and satyrs on fantastic animal feet are in themselves beautifully modelled sculptures of remarkable quality, full of vitality and not without sly humour. These bold forms are set above a concave frieze cast with the most delicate low relief. The lambrequin design, a favorite of contemporary silversmiths, enclosing shells, lilies and palmettes and interspersed with pendant iris and tassels, is handled with great subtlety. Although they are not explicit, certain motifs suggest this centerpiece may have been made for a member of the Royal family. *Dauphin*, or dolphin, was the title of the heir apparent to the French throne. The Grand Dauphin, son of Louis XIV, died in 1711, the first of several family deaths which clouded the last years of the reign. The lilies, though naturalistic, may allude to the stylized lilies, or *fleurs de lys*, which were the coat of arms of France and a Royal emblem.

The superb execution indicates an exceptional commission. Chasing of the bronze castings by steel tools defines and gives vibrant life to every detail. Refined chasing is to be expected of silver, but gilt bronzes rarely received such intensive finishing, at least not until much later in the 18th century. This may be explained by its use, for a centerpiece is intended to be seen at close range for some time, while most gilt bronzes are room furnishings. The art of making such bronzes was introduced from Italy by the skilled foreign workers who were brought to France by Colbert to produce luxurious furnishings of all kinds for the Royal palaces and to raise the general standard of French craftsmanship. This blending of several artistic traditions to form a new French style, as well as the further purpose of establishing technical and

artistic continuity were so successfully accomplished that by 1700 the specialized skills of French craftsmen were unequalled elsewhere in Europe. It is in large measure due to these artistic and technical attainments that the arts of metal, wood, lacquer and textiles attained an unprecedented degree of refinement which laid the ground for their subsequent flowering in the 18th century outside the royal workshops. Bronzes were typically used as ornamental and protective mounts on furniture and to make clock cases, lighting fixtures and andirons. Although large numbers of them survive, almost none are marked or otherwise documented, and it is virtually impossible to determine authorship, while dating generally is dependent on style. Some bronzes were made in the royal workshops at the Gobelins or by the privileged craftsmen quartered in the Louvre, but most were produced by two of the Paris guilds which minutely regulated the craft industries, the *fondeurs-ciseleurs*, who cast and chased the metal, and the *ciseleurs-doreurs*. The latter customarily added the gilding using the *ormoulu* process, by which powdered gold was applied in a mercury amalgam, followed first by heating to drive off the mercury and then by burnishing. The strict division of labor between the guilds, as well as normal craft practice, make these objects collaborative productions in which many successive hands took part.

The impressive chandelier illustrated in Fig. 9 is an example of a type current before and after 1700 in which a limited repertoire of cast elements is variously combined. It is of interest here because certain details such as the busts, central vase, acanthus mouldings and gadrooning have parallels in the centerpiece. These more or less standardized parts and the rather rough finishing normal at this time are in contrast to the individuality and finesse of corresponding parts of the centerpiece. Not only is no other contemporary gilt bronze centerpiece known, but the individual elements are apparently not duplicated elsewhere.

As we have seen, the *surtout* was customarily of silver, but under the conditions of relative austerity imposed by the grievous economic and military

Figure 8
Table Centerpiece (detail)



Figure 9
Chandelier
Gilt bronze
French, late 17th-early 18th century
Ht. 33 in. (83.8 cm.)
New York art market, 1961

situation of France in the first ten years of the 18th century it seems possible this centerpiece was designed by a silversmith, with necessary modifications to suit the technique of the harder and less valuable metal. Indeed, this centerpiece owes its creation and survival to its bronze material, for in 1700 the laws prohibiting use of silver were severely enforced, and in 1709 there was another great melting of existing plate.

The strict symmetry, compact proportions and firmly architectural composition point to a date about 1700 to 1710, when table centerpieces were still a novelty, and before the Regency style with its more expansive curves became evident. As much uncertainty still surrounds the arts of metal in France at this time, and because similar silver centerpieces have perished, we may never identify its designer or executants, nor even its first owner.

What is certain, however, is that talents of the first order used the language of a great style to make a work which crystallizes the disciplined splendor that made French art the envy of Europe.

The known history of this centerpiece begins in 1911 when Jacques Helft, the Paris silver scholar and dealer, acquired it from the Countess of Fumel-Aurillac. It was then owned by Richard Wallace II before returning to Helft's personal collection, from which it was acquired for the Museum.

The centerpiece in the Hermitage by Claude Ballin II is illustrated in *Connaissance des Arts, Les Grands Orfèvres de Louis XIII à Charles X*, Paris, 1965, pp. 96-7, and by Hugh Honour, *Goldsmiths and Silversmiths*, London, 1971, p. 109.

William Hutton

RONALD B. KITAJ'S DEFINITION OF NOBODY

"Looking at a Kitaj is like seeing a motion picture condensed into a moment."

Few painters in the mainstream of contemporary art could be referred to by a statement such as the one above by Maurice Tuchman of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Because most contemporary art since 1955 has been affected by Abstract Expressionism which developed in New York between 1940 and 1950, few contemporary artists have been able to escape its effect on their development. Ronald B. Kitaj, an American artist born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1932, was also influenced by Abstract Expressionism. However, since he studied in London during the critical years of his development from 1958 to 1961, his work is uniquely different from many American artists who were in New York during those years. After painting and teaching art in England from 1961 to 1967, Kitaj returned to America for a year as Visiting Artist at the University of California, Berkeley. He left Berkeley and returned to London where he continues to live and work, evidently preferring the artistic climate of London to that of New York.

One of Kitaj's important early paintings, *Notes Toward a Definition of Nobody* (Fig. 10), painted during 1961, has come to the Museum as a gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Gosman. In tracing the origin and development of this picture one can begin to understand the individuality of this artist.

For an artist as seriously interested in the meaning of imagery in art as is Kitaj, art history periodicals are not only informative, but also a source of ideas. An article in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, one of the most notable of such publications, served as the inspiration for *Notes Toward a Definition of Nobody*. The article, "The Picture of Nobody" by Gerta Calmann (Vol. 23, 1960), traces the treatment of the character

"Nobody" in the history of literature and visual art from about 1507 to the beginning of the 20th century when "Nobody" loses his individual character and becomes an abstraction.

"Nobody" first became popular in 1507 in Strassburg when Joerg Schan published a satiric poem illustrated by his own woodcut of the theme. Schan's hero introduced himself declaring, "Nobody is my name, I bear everybody's blame." The character was devised to take the blame for everybody's mistakes and misdeeds in chaotic household situations.

Of the 17 illustrations of the theme of "Nobody" in Calmann's article, Kitaj chose to use of the figure of "Nobody" in Wolfgang Strauch's copper engraving of 1570 as a prototype for the figure in his own painting. Strauch depicts "Nobody" sitting on a wall, his arms and legs crossed. Clad in classical robes with a padlock in his mouth, he looks upon a chaotic pile of household objects. Behind his right shoulder a sullen cook dangles a broken cauldron over the pile below and in the upper right corner, naked children run past, pointing at "Nobody".

The padlock depicted in "Nobody's" mouth in the engraving is symbolic of his inability to say anything to defend himself. At first an object of scorn, "Nobody" later symbolized virtuous patience, then political rebellion. To Kitaj, the "Nobody" theme suggested a universal symbol personifying the human condition of frustration and helplessness.

The importance of the "Nobody" theme to Kitaj is demonstrated by his incorporation of the subject



Figure 10
 RONALD B. KITAJ, American (1932-)
Notes Toward a Definition of Nobody, 1961
 Oil on canvas
 Signed in ink on back of canvas: R.B. KITAJ
 48 x 88 in. (122 x 223.5 cm.)
 Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Gosman
 73.42

into several paintings during 1961. In the Toledo picture, the figure of "Nobody" appears at the left. The artist updates the figure by painting basketball sneakers on his feet. He eliminates the images around the figure of "Nobody" in the 16th century engraving, except for the pile of rubble beneath his feet. In Kitaj's rendition, this pile of rubble becomes an area of scattered brushstrokes on the primed canvas below the same figure.

Kitaj does not normally plan the entire composition of his pictures in a preliminary drawing. Rather, they are developed by an additive collage principle, wherein one image suggests another through free association. The complexity and paradox in Toledo's painting are partly the result of this associative creative process, which in this picture was slow and intermittent.

The Toledo painting as it first appeared is illustrated in *Arts Magazine* (May-June, 1964, p. 58). However, the picture was quite different at that time than it now appears in its revised state. In 1961, the year that the painting was begun, the artist later reworked areas of it in order to bring it to a further state of completion. Evidently the picture appeared too sketchy to the artist, and he therefore chose to develop it further. The earlier stage of the painting provides an insight into the revision process. In its early state the upper half of the figure of "Nobody" was a more explicit image, wearing eyeglasses and closely resembling the engraving on which it was based. Calmann's article states that "Nobody" was depicted wearing eyeglasses which symbolized pretentious scholarship and were often part of a fool's costume from as early as the 16th century. "Nobody's" inability to speak in defense of himself was used by his early creators to underscore his role as a fool.

The central rectangle in the picture (which remains unchanged in the completed painting) encloses a fragmentary scene. This area of the picture overlaps the planes on which other images appear.

In this central scene an abstracted figure moves, perhaps to exit through the window in the background. The transparent character of the coloring of this figure gives it a ghost-like quality which clearly distinguishes it from the solidity of the other images in the picture. This enigmatic figure seems weightless, an effect achieved not only by color but also by the omission of any indication of his feet firmly planted on the floor. This weightless figure, stalking across the scene, suggests villainy and his gesture and movement also recalls those of the children in Strauch's engraving. A chair in the foreground enhances the sense of depth in the room.

The female figure in the lower right is barely indicated in the early state of the picture by sketchy lines painted on white canvas. The unfinished quality of this figure is indicative of the absence of resolution in the entire painting.

In working the painting, Kitaj brought visual coherence and balance to the work, and resolved the spatial relationships of the images. The most important change occurs in the image of "Nobody". In the finished painting, the figure becomes richly complex and enigmatic. The upper half of the body now becomes part of an abstract, ambiguous shape suggesting both a basketball goal backboard (relating to the shoes he is wearing) and an enormous padlock. This padlock which once sealed the lips of "Nobody" now dominates and restricts the figure's torso.

The central rectangle now becomes fully integrated into the composition. This is achieved by painting the planes behind its upper left and lower right corners in dark plum and black. The lower right corner directs attention to the female figure near it.

The figure now assumes greater importance because of the dark background painted around it. A year later, the same figure appears in reverse in

another Kitaj painting, *Kennst Du Das Land?* (Do You Know This Land?). The figure was obviously an important part of Kitaj's artistic vocabulary at the time.

The head in the upper right section of the painting appears to be sleeping. This form imparts a sense of reverie to the whole picture. The treatment of a similar head in another Kitaj picture, *Yamhill*, is directly related to the reclining head in the Toledo picture. In *Yamhill*, the mouth is closed by a padlock, symbolic of "Nobody".

The four figures in Toledo's picture and the planes on which they appear are related not only aesthetically but thematically. Their relationship is not explicit, but the images of a woman dressing, a man asleep in another area and a male figure about to leave through a window, all witnessed by "Nobody" suggests that these figures are parts of an overall narrative.

However, an attempt to interpret the images in the picture as parts of a simple narrative may lead to the imposition of meanings foreign to those images. As with any picture, the viewer sees what his past experience prepares him to see. As Kitaj himself said, "There is no, or very little question of, ultimate meanings, as, I think, issues of meaning are far less clear than is often supposed, even in simple, abstract art. I wish this could be less the case, or, better yet—I would like to develop into a switch-hitter and divide my time among the very complex, the very fresh and simple, the clearer meaning, the very difficult . . . and more . . . but maybe we haven't come upon that ripe time yet."

Like the Abstract Expressionists, Kitaj disperses points of interest over the entire surface of his pictures instead of directing the viewer's attention to a single point. For example, the namesake figure in Toledo's picture is not only placed off-center, its importance is rivaled by three other figures which appear in areas across the entire surface of the painting.

Within this picture Kitaj constantly suggests and then destroys the illusion of space. For example, each rectangular plane has its own spatial definition. The juxtaposition of these planes eliminates the possibility of any one of them dominating the space of the whole painting. The scene in the central area of the picture is presented in linear perspective. However, the scene does not extend to the edges of the rectangle which frames it. Instead, the edges of the scene are irregular making it appear to be torn, like a piece of paper out of its original context and remounted on a flat rectangle. The treatment of this scene not only suggests a collage technique, but it reasserts the flatness of the surface of the entire picture. In short, perspective is shown to be what it actually is, an illusion.

Kitaj's images are drawn from such varied sources as comic strip art, newspaper advertising illustrations, children's art and graffiti. These diverse images then develop into compositional areas within a painting. The staccato effect of the abrupt juxtaposition of these areas is most obvious in Kitaj's early works, such as the Toledo picture. The consistent use of line, applied over broad areas of color, serves to unify these separate areas within the composition. Kitaj's synthesis of imagery sources has been influenced by DeKooning, Matisse and Bacon. The result is a vision which is Kitaj's alone.

During this period in the history of art when many artists are following the principle that "less is more", Kitaj has managed to create easel pictures, as in his *Notes Toward a Definition of Nobody*, which are timely and provocatively complex. He has reintroduced images from daily life which have meanings of their own. He has used the present day concern with formal aspects of painting to present, but not replace, these familiar images.

Robert F. Phillips

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